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ABSTRACT

A tension has long existed between Americans' intense faith in education and the slow pace of changes in educational practices. Citizens have attempted to improve the future by arguing about how to improve youth through education, but actual school reforms have rarely matched expectations. Why this situation has occurred, and why such resistance to change exists, are explored in this history of educational reform. This interpretation of educational reform blends political and institutional analysis. A political perspective shows show groups become mobilized to publicize problems, devise remedies, and secure the adoption of policies by school boards and legislatures. Understanding the actual implementation of reforms in schools requires insight into the distinctive institutional character of schools. Change in the daily interactions of teachers and students is the hardest and most important reform to achieve, but it can be accomplished. It will be essential to put aside the recent radical restriction of debate on public and social goals and to renegotiate a pluralistic conception of the public good. (SLD)

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